

Gods Steadfast Love and Compassion

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back to the chapter we had in Micah chapter 7. Micah chapter 7. As I said, we're now at the end of our series in Micah.

And we end now in chapter 7. It's a wonderful chapter and so many of the verses in this chapter, we'll read it some of these verses, our verses we've probably heard before.

But just for this evening, I want us to look at the last few verses, verses 18 down to verse 20. Micah 7 and verses 18 down to verse 20.

We've seen the whole way through that in Micah we have a prophecy. We must see that this shepherd from some wee village up in a hillside was giving to the people.

Micah has always been said as a contemporary to Isaiah. They prophesied at the same time as we saw a few weeks ago. They sometimes even prophesied the exact same things.

[1 : 10] They both prophesied that one day, one day God would reign and one day all nations would come to him. And in Micah we see in the last few weeks that a prophecy that starts off in the first three chapters.

And it's judgment and wrath, judgment and wrath and judgment and more wrath. And in chapter 1 I'm sure if we're honest we're thinking where is a hope in this?

Chapter 2, a glimmer of hope. Chapter 3 a bit more hope. And chapter 4 we see even more hope. It's a book which is honest where God deals with the sin of his people.

It's people who have been worshipping, sacrificing to other idols. But here in chapter 7 at the end of this prophecy we see a chapter that is filled with reality but also filled with so much hope.

So much hope. All the way through we see a glimpse of Jesus. Chapter 5 and we saw the wonderful passage where we see that the ruler becoming savior would be born in Bethlehem.

[2 : 20] Last week we saw that Jesus will reign, he will rule. And now finally we arrive at chapter 7.

What a conclusion this prophecy has. What an amazing conclusion Micah ends his prophecy with. The contrast of the first few verses of chapter 1 to the last few verses of chapter 7 are just incredible.

We go from misery and hope and hopelessness. Chapter 1 we have the army coming, they will invade your land, they will destroy you and there is nothing you can do.

Chapter 7 ends with the hope, the question posed by Micah. The question Micah asks in verse 18, who is a God like you?

What a question it is. Who is a God like you? We have seen so much of God throughout this book, we have seen all the wondrous ways he acts towards his people and even towards his enemies.

[3 : 39] In this final section Micah closes always been saying, by talking about God. Micah gives an answer to the rhetorical question, we know that Micah is going to answer his own question.

There is a question nonetheless. I want us this evening to look at these verses and see roughly three different ways that Micah answers his own question.

There is some overlap as we look at these things. Micah's question, who is a God like you? We worship a God who is forgiving, who is faithful and who is loving.

In these verses Micah shows us a God who is forgiving, faithful and loving. Speaking to Murdoch Campbell, who went away on his, won't go on holiday or a sky, he went away to relax.

He couldn't believe, I forgot to tell you all what the name Micah meant in the first sermon I preached. He has been going on at me since week one about that. I forgot to tell you now, and it's important that we know now, because the name Micah means who is like our God.

[4 : 55] Micah's own name answers the question he asks here. Who is a God like you? He asks the question. And Micah's name itself literally means word for word, who is like our God.

Micah's own name is a part of his own prophecy. So our forgiving God, what is God like? How we see God act again and again in the pages, in the verses of this prophecy.

We see that in this prophecy, in our lives, in Scripture, God is a forgiving God.

There are danger in saying these things, we hear these things so often, we forget just how wonderful a reality and truth that is for every single one of us here this evening. For the Christians here, it's a great reminder that our God is a forgiving God.

He has forgiven us. For those here, as if he are not Christians this evening. Here's your hope, your God who made you, the God who knows you, the God who must one day answer to.

[6 : 09] He is now a forgiving God. I see a few different ways in these verses where Micah paints a picture of how God is forgiving.

First of all, we see that in verse 18. We see that God is forgiving in that he pardons iniquity. God pardons iniquity.

And here we see the legal terms coming in again. We said before the book of Micah is just like a court scene. And it was a court scene.

God was bringing judgment against his people. He is judge and he is witness. But he is also the one who will rescue his people. And here in verse 18, God pardons iniquity.

He pardons for wrongdoing his people has done against him. God stands as judge.

[7 : 12] God alone judges a sin. God alone is the one who says you have sinned against me. God alone says you have sinned against me and I judge you as deserving death because of that sin.

In the mornings we are doing Ephesians and we saw that in Ephesians chapter 2. What does God say through Paul about us? Before we say we are dead, dead, dead in our sins, dead in our trespasses.

No life, no hope. God says I have judged you as sinful. We saw that all the way through this book. Again and again God reminds us people of how he has judged them through all their sins.

And here we see again God as judge. This time he is not pouring out Raphael saying this time I am judge and because I am judge I can and I am and I will pardon you.

I will pardon your sins. You fold over God's. You have hated me in so many ways but yet I will pardon your sins.

[8 : 24] God alone is our judge. That is terrifying. It is also encouraging that God alone can forgive us and God alone does forgive us.

So God pardons sin in this and these verses. We then see he also, this next section in verse 18, he passes over to Transgression.

He pardons sin and he passes over it. He passes over our sin and its punishment. He passes over all the wrong we have done against him.

Why does he pass over it? Because he is a forgiving God. How can God forgive me? How can God forgive me for all I have done against him? How can God forgive me for all the hate that I have poured out towards him since I was born?

The reality is the answer does not lie in ourselves. There is nothing we can do to impress God. Nothing we can do to bend his arm, to make him forgive us.

[9 : 30] To make him pass over our sin. As we said this morning, as we even said in the prayer, God passes over our sin with our Christian here this evening because we have been covered by our Saviour.

When God sees us, what does he see? When God sees the Christians here, what does he see? In fact, even on last Thursday in Samaritan 4, we covered this.

When God sees us, if we are Christians here this evening, he sees his Son. He sees us as covered in his perfection, covered in his holiness, washed and made clean by Jesus.

And so he passes over our sin. He passes over it because we are covered by our Saviour.

He pardons our sin, he passes over our sin. It is even more incredible when we see in verse 19, he treads our iniquities, our wrongdoings underfoot.

[10 : 35] So a wonderful image here, that God, he is so done with our sin, but we deserve to be crushed by him, he doesn't crush us, he crushes our sins.

So where we deserve all the punishment for it, we see none of it if we are Christians. God treads iniquity underfoot.

But God must deal with sin. And for Christians we've escaped the wrath of God. And sin was thread by God.

And who became our sin-bearer? It was Jesus. But Jesus on the cross, he bore our sin, and he for that time became our sin-bearer.

When God looked on Jesus on that cross, what did he see? He saw and he punished the sins of all his people. All the sins of all his people.

[11:48] God did tread in our sins, and that means we are free of punishment, but only because our Saviour Jesus took that punishment on himself in our place.

And that is wonderful encouragement, wonderful encouragement. That you stop and make us think, that's the wonder of who God is, the wonder of what he has done for us, one of what our Saviour has done for us.

God pardoned sin, passes over sin, he treads sin underfoot. This is a final wonderful image here, that he casts our sin, into the depths of the sea.

By this stage in these verses, we know what Micah is saying, we get what he is saying, but yet God has given him more examples to show us. It's gone, your sin has been forgiving you, so much so, it's almost as if it's gone into the sea, never to be seen ever again.

We ask all our sins, all the word, there is the strongest word you can use in Hebrew, that all word, it's everything, it's all encompassing. There's not one sin that won't be cast into the sea for those here tonight who love God.

[13:10] Those who are tonight of Jesus as our Saviour, all our sins, all the punishment of all these sins has been cast as it were into the depths of the sea. Gone forever.

Our God is a forgiving God. The God we worship here this evening is a forgiving God. The God we all must one day answer to is a forgiving God.

For Christians here this evening, they should give us so much opportunity to praise Him, but we worship this forgiving God. Those here who are not Christians, it's good news for you, it's good news.

Although your sin requires punishment by Him, that is time for forgiveness. You're still here, you're alive, He's given you today the gift of life.

You just heard now, God is a forgiving God, you've heard, there's nothing you can do, but come to Him and cry out for forgiveness. Tell us something that Jesus done it all for you. Our God is a forgiving God.

[14:19] Then we see even more from that, Micah shows us God is a faithful God. God is a faithful God.

All through Micah, we've been covering and seeing a theme. The same theme we saw actually in our morning studies, the same theme we saw even in our Thursday evening studies.

That theme is that our God is a faithful God. God of the covenant. Our God is a God who makes covenant, who makes promises to His people, who keeps these promises, despite how often and how many ways His people mess it up again and again and again.

Our God is a God of faithfulness. That He says what He will do and He doesn't. He promises His people this or that and He carries these things out.

God in Micah, at the start of Micah, He promises destruction, He promises wrath, but He also promises that He has His people and He will keep His people.

[15:31] All the way through Scripture, God promises He has a people and He will keep His people. God is a God of the covenant.

We see that in verse 18. It's already God passed over to the transgression. Who did God pass over to the transgression for in verse 18? For the remnant of His inheritance.

For literally His possession, those who belong to Him, God will forgive their sins. God has a people. God cares for those people. It is those people, the Son came into the world to say. It is God's people here this evening who can worship Him and know that yes, we are such poor examples of Christians, but yes, God is still true and God is still faithful.

See again, in verse 20. We see this idea that you will show faithfulness to Jacob. In other words, God has been faithful to the people of Israel.

[16:41] He has been faithful since the start and that faithfulness continues in Micah's day and on into the future. That God's faithfulness can be traced back according to Micah's view of things all the way back to the start.

We see a new testament that goes all the way back before that. Long before that as we will see later on.

I wonder if we, don't worry, we won't do this. I wonder if we did do this, if we aligned everyone up in order, of the Christians in order, of who here has been a Christian for the longest all the way down to the newest Christian here.

I've got each person to tell us each part of our story. Each person to tell us of how God saved them and how God has been with them since their salvation.

The reality is, from those who have been Christians for the longest to the newest Christian, they'll all give wonderful accounts, all going down to the same thing, that God is faithful.

[17 : 49] In various ways, at various times of our lives, we see it more perhaps, but all the time, He is faithful.

We said before that in Micah we see God has promised his people as saviour. And in Micah's day that seemed so unlikely, that seemed so far away.

How can you promise a saviour in the same breath you're telling us we're going to be destroyed, in the same breath you're telling us we're going into captivity? How can a saviour come if there's no hope for us now but yet we see the saviour did come?

God was faithful to His promise. It's always through the Old Testament, from Genesis to the birth of Jesus, God has again and again told His people, one is coming who will save His people.

One is coming from Me, sent by Me. One is coming and He will be your Messiah. God has faithfully kept that promise.

[18 : 55] We worship a triune God, a faithful God, Father, Son and Spirit. God is faithful in all He does and all He sees. God is the covenant keeping God.

So this is not just theology for us, this is so important. We can understand this, but we have to apply it to our lives. What does that mean for us? It means right now if we love our saviour, if we know Jesus, no matter how far away from Him we may feel or how much of a useless example of a Christian we may feel.

We're right, our issues we are going through, as bad as they may be, the reality is we worship a saviour who is faithful. And Jesus has made promises to us, has He not?

Jesus has promised that He will never leave His people, never forget or forsake His people, and that's still true just now. Jesus has promised that when He goes, He will send a comforter, the Spirit, to be with us, and we know who heard His morning, that is true just now for us.

Jesus has promised that one day we will go home to Him and death, when He will come back and collect us. And if we are away that day we will be with Him in eternity and with Him forever.

[20 : 16] Because He is faithful, we know that to be true too. But one day we will be with Him forever and we will see Him as He is and worship Him with each other forever.

Not just nice things to get us through the week, not just some kind of theological conversation, this is a wonderful reality of the life of the Christian.

Our God is a faithful God. Our God is a forgiving and faithful God. He is so forgiving He sent His Son to die on our behalf.

He is so faithful that whoever trusts in Him will never be let go. Forgiving, faithful.

And finally we see our God is a loving God. We see that He delights, He delights instead fast love at the end of verse 18.

[21 : 22] God delights instead fast love. There is no missing words, no added words in the Bible if a word is important.

Could just say God shows steadfast love, God practices steadfast love, God does steadfast love, if that made sense. What does it say? It says God delights, He delights in steadfast love.

He does not retain His anger forever. He does not retain His anger forever because He delights in steadfast love.

The word used there for steadfast love, it's a very hard word to translate well. It's the same sentence we get. It's God's never-ending, always-going, eternal loving-kindness towards His people.

In Hebrew, there's just one word. In English, loving-kindness is the best we can manage. But the image is so wonderful. The word used there, God delights in never-ending love.

[22 : 29] He delights in ongoing love. He delights in showing His people love without limit and without end.

Since this is the last week, we can go into a bit of Hebrew. It's Chesed. It's for English, it's C-H-E-S-E-D. Chesed, his Chesed love. And again and again, going right back to Genesis, we see

that word being used.

God's love is a Chesed love. It's this idea, it's an immense idea. It's so interesting. It ties into what we had this morning in Ephesians.

The love of Jesus is beyond breadth and height and length. We discussed it this morning. It's the same idea, this unending, and we can't define it. I'm going to be repeating myself, I've gone any longer.

God's love is ongoing and it's big. It's ongoing and it's big. Even more interesting, wherever we find the word, Chesed being used about God's everlasting love, about God's, His steadfast love, we always find another word somewhere close by to it.

[23 : 47] Emmet, E-M-E-T. Where God shows His everlasting love, He also shows Emmet. And we have that here. Emmet being the word for faithfulness.

We just saw that just now. That God is a faithful God. And because God is faithful, we can trust that His love for us is real and that it is true.

The faithfulness of God and the love of God towards His people, they go hand in hand. Almost always you find one of these words, everyone will be somewhere close by in Scripture.

God is faithful. Why is He faithful? He's faithful because He loves His people. And why does He love His people? Because He's God and because He is faithful to them.

And we can't dig any further than that without being well beyond our depth. You're my depth anyway, definitely.

[24 : 56] God loves His people because God loves His people. And because He loves Him, He's faithful to them. This morning we asked a question.

We discussed it very briefly. How much does God love His people? We asked a question before actually, even last week we discussed it just in passing. So God loves His people, yes.

But how much, how is that displayed to us? How can we know He really does love us to the extent that we're claiming He does? John 17 and verse 22.

John 17 and 22 is a verse we should have written and engraved wherever you can. It's a wonderful section that Jesus is praying in John 17. He's praying to His Father and He says to God, The glory that you have given me, I have given to them.

They may be one even as we are one. I and them and you and me. They may become perfectly one. So that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

[26 : 12] We were talking about the question just last week, but it makes sense for us here to look at it again. We say here that God's love for us is faithful and everlasting.

But in John 17, Jesus himself tells us the extent, even use that word, the size of God's love. So that they may know that you loved them as you loved me.

How much does God love His people? What Jesus himself tells us, He loves us as much as He loves His own eternal Son.

That is just beyond us in so many ways. That is mind blowing, completely mind blowing. That God loves His people even as, in the same way as, just as He loves His Son.

Again, what can we say to add to God's word there? To make it even more beautiful than it is, that's what He says. I thought Jesus says to us in John 17, read that section, read the chapter yourself.

[27 : 25] It's a wonderful chapter. And that we wonderful, incredible revelation is just part of the paragraph, just fair.

Just said naturally, said normally by Jesus. It's such a simple fact, He just says it. How much does God love His people?

He loves us as He loves His Son. And why? Why? Because we are Jesus. Again, we say this already, because we're covered by Him.

Because when God looks at us, He sees His Son. And He loves His Son, therefore He loves us. The love of God for His people goes back before time itself. We saw that in Ephesians chapter 1, before the earth was created, before any of this was here, time and reality itself.

[28 : 23] God knew us, He saw us, and He set His love on us. The love of God goes right back.

The love of God encompasses all. He is loving in all the ways we can even begin to understand. And the love of God is displayed to us in the person of Jesus.

Our God is a forgiving God. He is a faithful God, and He is a loving God.

Now, though Micah in many ways is a tough book to read, a tough book to study, it's a wonderful book. Short few chapters where we see God being displayed in all His glory.

We see that even all that way away, all that time back, God was preparing to send His Son.

[29 : 28] God is working everything together to have a people His Son to come to. God is working all things together for our good and for His ultimate glory.

That is the God we must know. The God the Christians here know. We know our God. We know our God is a forgiving God because He has forgiven us.

We know our God is faithful because we're all still here. He keeps us and He's kept us this far. And we know our God is loving because we know our Savior loved us.

For God so loved the world. That is the reality. That's what God we know, the God we worship. For those here this evening who as of yet are not Christians, how do you know God?

Who is God to you? Back to Micah's question, who is a God like you? The Christians here can say, yes, you are a God who is faithful, who is forgiving, who is loving.

[30 : 36] For those here this evening who are yet not Christians, who is a God like you? Who is God to you? How do you see God? Is He distant? Is He far away?

Is He hearing? Is He hanging over you in wrath? Are you terrified of Him? Do you ignore Him?

Because unless you can say, like Micah says, like the Christians here can say tonight, that God is my God. That God is a God. I know God is a God who is faithful, who I know all things to be true.

Unless you can say that also tonight, then you are on the wrong side. Seven weeks since this morning, seven weeks since this has gone by so quickly for me, so quickly.

Our lives go on so quickly. But God has been clear from the days of Micah up till now, from before that up till now.

[31 : 41] You have all heard the Gospel, the goodness of Jesus countless times. You have no excuse left. No excuse. You have to come and know the God whom Micah knew.

The God who the Christian here this evening knows. Come to Jesus. Believe in Jesus. Accept that what He has done is enough to cover your sins.

It's enough to make you right with God, but it is nothing you can do to impress God, nothing you can do to win His love, nothing you can do to make anything true about God for you this evening.

If you don't come to Jesus. Let's bear our heads in a word of prayer. Lord, we thank You Lord for the privilege we have had to study Your Word.

Tonight, over the last seven weeks, Lord, thank You for the great privilege we have to come together and to study these things and to discuss these things. Thank You for Your faithfulness.

You are a loving God, a faithful God, a forgiving God.

[32 : 47] But we see these things through in Your Scripture. Even in the prophecy You gave to Your servant Micah, He proclaimed all these things about you. You are a God who is so wonderful, so beyond our understanding in so many marvellous ways.

But yet You've made these things clear to us. You have made clear to us that You have a people. You have made clear to us that there is a Saviour who all may turn to.

There is a Saviour who has done the work if only we would believe and cry out to Him. We do pray for our friends here this evening who as of yet don't know You.

That would be their story. To us who read Your Word and listen to Your Word, even this evening, even just now, that You would work in their lives and work in their hearts. You would show them who You are.

You would make clear to them what You have done for them. But clear to them their need for You. Their need to come to You. And trust in the finished work of Your Son. Help us as we come to sing our final item of praise to do so.

[33 : 54] Hearts and minds full of joy and praise for You. And all You are and all You've done and continue to do for us. It's got all these things through our triumphant Saviour's name. Amen.